

Doomed to Destruction

Heber Tabernacle Falls to Modern Age

Special to The Tribune
HEBER—A monument to Wasatch County's past soon will give way to the modern age.

THE WASATCH Stake Tabernacle, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a pioneer structure of red sandstone is scheduled to be torn down in August.

The 77-year-old structure was built by the first permanent settlers in Heber Valley.

THE DECISION to tear down the tabernacle was made by LDS Church officials following continuous public efforts to maintain it as one of the country's living historic landmarks, according to Harold Call, stake president.

Although the building still is a beautiful structure on the outside, rating as a major tourist attraction, the interior is in poor condition, expensive to maintain and has insufficient seating capacity, Mr. Call said.

BIDS FOR demolition will be let in August for the tabernacle

and the nearby Heber Social Hall.

A new stake center with a social hall will be constructed at the present site.

THE HEBER Social Hall was built in 1906-1907 under the supervision of Edward D. Clyde. Most of the work was by volunteer laborers.

The county history book, "How Beautiful Upon the Mountains," records that when the building was started men from the three organized wards turned out in full force to help with the project.

The women were present to serve them a meal at the stake house.

A unique feature is the buildings circular spring floor. Underneath the huge oak floor are more than 400 coil springs.

CONSTRUCTION of this floor was a delicate venture. Each piece of flooring was laid carefully, and while the floor was being constructed the work proceeded night and day.

George Barzee, a surveyor,

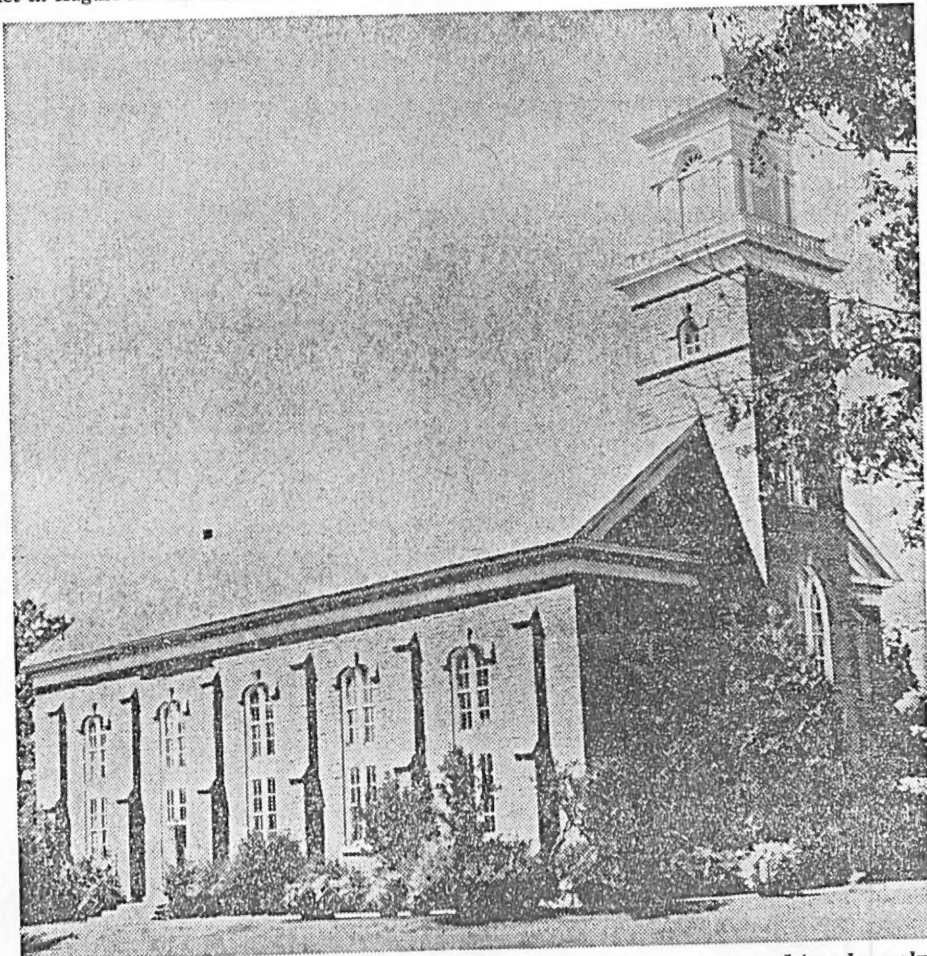
was called in and he computed a mathematical formula which the workmen followed and finished the work. The floor has been considered one of the best dance floors in the state.

BOTH BUILDINGS are of red sandstone, the first building material used in the valley following erection of the first log dwellings. The rock was hauled from a quarry owned by John Crook in Lake Creek, east of Heber.

Elisha Averett supervised the masonry on the tabernacle. Men with chisels then painstakingly hammered and chipped the quarried stone into uniform blocks.

REMODELING HAS been at a minimum through the years and both structures remain much as they were originally.

The new stake center will serve the needs of 12 wards including Heber, Charleston, Midway, Wallsburg, Center and Daniels. Seating capacity is planned for 2,000. It will also house Heber Second and Fifth Wards.



Historic Wasatch Stake Tabernacle, Heber, will be demolished to make way for a new structure. Built 77 years ago of sandstone by early settlers, it has long been a tourist attraction.



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Open Letter Sent By USU Museum Head

An open letter to the Heber Valley
Residents:

A few of your fellow citizens are making a valiant effort to save the Tabernacle in Heber. Others are asking what good is the old building, why save it, what can we use it for? These are good questions and as an outsider, I would like to try and answer them.

The Wasatch Stake Tabernacle is a fine example of early Utah Architecture. Built shortly after Utah became a state and while the church was still recovering from the intense prosecution by the Federal Government. The Tabernacle is a symbol of the efforts of the Saints in Heber Valley to live their gospel. The Tabernacle, along with the city-county building, jail, bank block building, and the old part of the Exchange, give the town an atmosphere of the center of town. To save the building provides the opportunity to develop a unique museum activity.

As I see it, Heber Valley and the Tabernacle offers an unusual chance to exhibit a way of life and an interesting settlement pattern. Here in an area with well-defined limits, the surrounding mountains, are five Mormon communities all built on the same general Mormon plan as Nauvoo and other Mormon cities and towns. Each town has an interesting history; nothing great, no national heroes, but just solid homestead things like irrigation canals, mills, streams, homes and farms. Yet, I feel that driving through the valley visiting many of these sights, with ample information about each one, would be of interest to many tourists and local Utahns. The Tabernacle would be the center of this valley tour. It would serve as the orientation center where the history of the valley would be detailed, and where the tour of the valley and what to expect of it would be explained.

With ample planning and publicity the numbers of additional tourists held in the valley should easily be sufficient to represent an industry with a payroll of about \$500,000. I only hope that there is enough vision among the citizens of the valley to realize the great missionary and financial assets they have in the Tabernacle and the folk history of the valley.

CARL HUGH JONES

Museum Head

Utah State University